

Effects of Second Language Learning on First Language English Skills: Southern Tasmanian Teacher Perceptions

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Declaration of Originality

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Definition of Key Terms

The language used in this paper reflects the terms that are used in the Australian Curriculum: Languages document (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2015c), as well as common terms that are used in the area of language learning.

Bilingual: Fluent in two languages (Historica Canada, 2015).

First Language (L1): The primary language spoken at home; the language in which schooling is conducted and through which primary instruction occurs (ACARA, 2015c). For the purposes of this research, students' L1 is English.

Immersion: No less than 50% of the entire curriculum (all subject areas) is taught using the second language (Bostwick, 2011; Keckes & Papp, 2000).

Second Language (L2): The second or additional language (sometimes referred to as foreign language) that students are studying at school (ACARA, 2015c). Second languages in this study include but are not limited to: Chinese, French, Indonesian, Japanese and Italian.

Acronyms

In addition to the key terms (defined above), the following acronyms have been used within this paper:

ACARA: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority.

HREC: Human Research Ethics Committee.

L1: First language.

L2: Second/Additional language(s).

Chapter 1: Introduction

When I was a student I loved studying languages. Throughout high-school I studied Japanese, German and French, and as I progressed in each of these areas I was convinced that my English skills and conceptual understandings also improved – particularly in the areas of vocabulary and grammar. Since this time, I have been curious about whether other second language (L2) learners have experienced a similar effect on their first language (L1) and consequently this was the inspiration for my research.

Background

Second language learning has become increasingly prioritised as the world has become more globalised (Kramsch, 2014). This, according to ICEF Monitor (2013), is because many people see L2 competency as a requirement for success in the modern world, not only by enabling communication with other countries, but also through improving cultural understanding. This view is reflected in countries such as Iran, where L2 learning, particularly in English, is seen to increase opportunities such as studying at prestigious universities (Taguchi, Magid & Papi, 2009). Similarly, Canada, as a bilingual nation, provides educational opportunities in both French and English, although it is not compulsory for every citizen to be bilingual (Historica Canada, 2015). In addition to this, in Europe, where L2 learning is seen to be highly regarded, the importance of L2 learning is reflected in the European Union's goal for every European to speak two languages in addition to their first (European Union, 2015).

Many Asian countries also reflect this prioritisation of L2 learning, such as in Hong Kong where it is part of the Government's policy for all primary and secondary students to learn English in addition to the official language Chinese (Dickson & Cummings, 1996). Singapore has also embraced this idea in their bilingual education policy where every subject is taught in L2 English, with only one lesson per week to be conducted in what the policy

terms the “mother tongue” (Dixon, 2005). Furthermore, Malaysia has launched a national program entitled ‘Upholding Bahasa Melayu and Strengthening English’, emphasising the importance of both the national language (Bahasa Malaysia) and English for all Malaysians (Darmi & Albion, 2013).

In the past, it was suggested that this focus on L2 learning was harmful to L1 abilities, but since the 1970s a number of studies have been conducted in this area and the general conclusion is that no ill-effect occurs as a result of L2 learning (Keckes & Papp, 2000; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lampkin, 1982; Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland, Pollard & Mercuri, 1993). In fact, evidence was found in these studies to suggest that participants’ L1 skills had actually improved as a result of their L2 studies, particularly in the areas of grammar, punctuation and vocabulary (Keckes & Papp; Swain & Lampkin).

Purpose for Research

In 1989, Odin wrote about the idea of language transfer, discussing extensively how the skills and knowledge learnt in one’s first language can be drawn on and applied to a second or additional language that is being learnt. Given this perceived transfer from L1 to L2, it is possible that such a transfer might work in reverse - that learning from L2 could transfer to L1. While evidence of the language transfer from L1 to L2 is well documented, evidence supporting a reverse language transfer is harder to come by. Nevertheless, the researcher has found five studies of note that support the idea of reverse language transfer, specifically noting improvements in L1 grammar (Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Keckes & Papp, 2000), punctuation (Swain & Lapkin), vocabulary (Swain & Lapkin) and awareness of language (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland et al., 1993).

Within the three international studies (Keckes & Papp, 2000; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982), it was generally agreed that the more L2 instruction time that

occurred, the greater the benefit in L1. Lo Bianco and Freebody (1997) also raise this point and suggest that this benefit occurs as a result of high levels of competence in more than one language. Australian-based Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1993), however, suggest that even limited exposure to L2 may have benefits on L1, concluding from their research that positive effects in L1 English in terms of word awareness can be seen even after limited exposure to an L2 (in this case Italian). Similarly, Worsley and Harbon (2001) conducted a Tasmanian study finding that after 11 weeks of L2 learning (in Japanese), the primary school students demonstrated an improved metalinguistic awareness of the English language as well as increased competence. This increase in awareness and competence is frequently cited by supporters of second language instruction (*Linking languages and literacy*, 2002).

Whilst both of these Australian studies (Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland et al., 1993) suggest there to be benefits in L1 as a result of limited L2 learning in both the early childhood and primary school settings, the researcher of this proposed study wonders whether these benefits are also experienced by students in Southern Tasmanian high-schools. According to Harbon (2012), Australian schools are inconsistent with the opportunities they offer students in regards to language education. Schools offer second language instruction to varying degrees with some primary schools having ample opportunities and resources including specialist teachers and access to native speakers, while other primary schools do not offer any second language as part of their curriculum. This means that not all Australian students are given the opportunity to study a second language at the primary school level and many students may only begin L2 learning when they enter high-school (ACARA, 2015c; Harbon). At this later stage of development, do students still experience benefits to their L1 literacy skills? Do Tasmanian high-school students experience similar effects in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and word awareness as the students in the aforementioned studies? Do these benefits vary depending on the L2 being studied? These questions, which may be

important to consider in the scheme of L2 learning in Tasmanian high-schools, have not been adequately addressed at this stage in published literature and thus the researcher sees this as a worthwhile focus in this limited research project.

This research is significant and relevant because it links in with the debate on whether students should be learning a second language and whether ACARA's desire to include more L2 learning in the Australian Curriculum is justified (ACARA, 2015c; Lo Bianco, 2009). Many parents in Australia, according to an article in Fairfax Media's *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Macgibbon, 2011), dispute the teaching of second languages in schools on the basis that they have little benefit. One argument against L2 teaching is that the time could be better spent on literacy and numeracy (Hiatt, 2014), but if L2 learning can be shown to improve L1 skills, as many studies including Keckes and Papp (2000) and Yelland et al., (1993) claim, then this argument is counterintuitive. This proposed research seeks to determine whether the claims made by previous researchers in the field are true in the context of Southern Tasmanian high-school students, and thus the results will contribute to this existing debate.

Research Question

The central question for this research project is: What effects do Southern Tasmanian English teachers perceive second language learning to have on high-school students' first language English skills?

Assumptions

This research is based on a number of assumptions, namely that: participants will respond honestly; English (literacy) skills are a priority within the curriculum; L2 learning is allocated less time in the curriculum than English; and English teachers understand their students' skills in English, particularly in the areas of vocabulary, punctuation and grammar.

Participant integrity.

The researcher believes it is reasonable to assume that participants will respond truthfully during the research interviews because participation is voluntary. Furthermore, as there is no monetary gain to be had, teachers who volunteer will be intrinsically motivated to participate and this supports the assumption that participants will respond to interview questions with honesty.

English (literacy) as a priority.

Western Australian government schools have recently decreased the number of language programs they offer, with the Western Australian Primary Principals Association president, Stephen Breen, citing the prioritisation of literacy and numeracy as the reason for this (Hiatt, 2014). Furthermore, the design of the Australian Curriculum implicitly prioritises English as it was one of only three curriculum areas originally endorsed in 2010, and literacy is placed at the top of the list of cross-curriculum priorities (ACARA, 2015b). Consequently, there is little doubt that English is considered to be a priority in Australian schools.

Time allocation per subject.

Given this prioritisation of English in the curriculum, there is less time for language education to occur in schools (Bense, 2015). This is evidenced in Figure 1 (over page) which details the percentage (%) of school time allocated to each subject at each year level as well as the approximate equivalent time in hours per year. This information is sourced from the Department of Education and Child Development (Government of South Australia, 2011), the Australian Curriculum: Languages (ACARA, 2015c) and the Curriculum Design Paper: Version 3 (ACARA, 2012). Looking at the highlighted sections, it is evident that a higher proportion of the time available in the curriculum is dedicated to English than Languages.

Learning Areas	F	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
English	27%	27%	27%	22%	22%	20%	20%	12%	12%	12%	12%
	270	270	270	220	220	200	200	120	120	120	120
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
Maths	18%	18%	18%	18%	18%	16%	16%	12%	12%	12%	12%
	180	180	180	180	180	160	160	120	120	120	120
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
Science	4%	4%	4%	7%	7%	7%	7%	10%	10%	12%	12%
	40	40	40	70	70	70	70	100	100	120	120
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
Humanities and Social Science	4%	4%	4%	10%	10%	12%	12%	14%	14%	17%	17%
	40	40	40	100	100	120	120	140	140	170	170
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
The Arts	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	8%	8%	8%	8%
	40	40	40	50	50	50	50	80	80	80	80
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
Health and Physical Education	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%
	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
Languages	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	8%	8%	8%	8%
	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	80	80	80	80
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
Technologies	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	6%	6%	8%	8%	8%	8%
	20	20	20	40	40	60	60	80	80	80	80
	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours	hours
TOTAL Allocated Time	72%	72%	72%	79%	79%	79%	79%	80%	80%	49%	49%

Figure 1. Allocation of school hours per subject.

Teacher knowledge of student capabilities.

One requirement of teaching is knowing what your students have achieved (Brady & Kennedy, 2012). Through assessment and reporting that relates back to learning outcomes, teachers collect evidence of their students' strengths and capabilities as well as their weaknesses and areas for improvement (Brady & Kennedy; Cunningham, 2009). Thus it follows that, as a result of engaging with this information, an English teacher will know what their students have achieved in all areas of the English curriculum.

Hypothesis

Given the findings from previous research in this area (Keckes & Papp, 2000; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland et al., 1993), it is expected that this research will yield a similar result with the majority of teachers interviewed indicating that students' L1 English skills have benefited from their L2 studies. It is, however, unrealistic to expect that all teachers will share the same perception and consequently some teachers may report that no effect or even a negative effect has been noted which could be attributed to the L2 learning.

Depending on the results, more research will need to be conducted to ascertain the extent of the effect that students experience. If a positive trend is recorded (as is anticipated) or a negative effect, then research can continue to establish the extent of the effect and potentially inform curriculum implementation practices in the future. If, however, most participants believe there to be no effect, then it may be decided to abandon this line of inquiry into how students' L1 English skills might be improved.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The majority of studies conducted in the area of second language learning focus on the effects of the first language (L1) on the second (L2). Of the relevant studies that address the effects of L2 on L1, the majority were conducted in either Canada (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982) or central Europe (Keckes & Papp, 2000) where L2 learning is seen as a necessity. In addition to these, two Australian studies have examined the effect that limited exposure to L2 in the early primary years has in terms of L1 development (Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland, Pollard & Mercuri, 1993).

The two Canadian studies examined the achievements of English speaking Canadian children who were enrolled at a French speaking school for the preliminary years of their education (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982). Students in both studies participated in L2 (French) immersion and their achievements in L1 (English) were then tested and compared with a control group of students who did not participate in L2 learning (Lambert & Tucker; Spolsky, 1973; Swain & Lapkin).

Instead of examining the effects that learning French had on students' L1 English like Lambert and Tucker (1972) and Swain and Lapkin (1982), Keckes and Papp's (2000) study examined the effects that L2 learning in English, French or Russian had on participants' L1 Hungarian. The high-school aged participants in Keckes and Papp's study engaged in one of three types of L2 learning: immersion, specialised (seven or eight L2 classes per week with other subjects in L1), or control (two or three hours of L2 learning a week with all other instruction in L1). Subsequent to their L2 instruction, the written L1 work by participants in each of these groups was analysed using the Bernstein-Lawton-Loban method (as cited in Keckes & Papp) to establish the complexity of the syntactical structure within embedded clauses. L2 learning was determined to have effected L1 depending on the score the participant received – a high score indicating increased complexity in the response suggesting

that L2 learning had a positive effect on L1 production. Results from each group were analysed and compared to determine the effect of L2 on L1.

In addition to these studies that examine the benefits of L2 immersion learning on L1, two Australian-based studies have focused on the effect that limited L2 exposure has on L1 learning. Yelland et al., (1993) studied the word awareness of Victorian students in their first and second years of schooling (preparatory and Grade 1), while Worsley and Harbon (2001) studied the language awareness of students in a Tasmanian primary school.

The students in the study by Yelland et al., (1993) were divided into two categories: monolingual students (students who speak only one language and were not learning a second) and marginal bilingual students (students learning Italian for 1 hour per week at school). One group of monolingual students and marginal bilingual students were tested for word awareness in each grade. Word awareness in this study was defined as the student's ability to separate the structure of the word from the object that the word represents (Yelland et al.,). Students were deemed to have word awareness if they could identify words as little (words with only one syllable) or big (two to five syllables) without being influenced by the meaning of a word. For example: a student with word awareness can accurately identify *ant* as a little word and *caterpillar* as a big word even though they both represent small animals; a student without word awareness would incorrectly identify words such as *tree*, *bed* and *whale* as big because they represent large objects, rather than focussing on the fact that each word is monosyllabic.

Similar to Yelland et al., (1993), Worsley and Harbon (2001) conducted a study that examined the benefits that primary school aged children experienced as a result of their second language learning. The Tasmanian student participants in this study engaged in a single unit of Japanese (L2) work over a period of 11 weeks that involved comparing the

same book written in L1 and L2. This study was specifically designed to test students' awareness of the relationship between the two languages.

These studies provide invaluable information about the effects that L2 learning has on L1 skills. In each of the reviewed studies, similar themes have been identified and these will provide a basis on which to start investigations into whether Tasmanian teachers perceive L2 learning to have any effect on high-school students' L1 English skills.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of second language instruction as communication in L2 cannot occur without using L2 vocabulary (Folse, 2004). Perhaps it is for this reason that vocabulary was a focus in both of the Canadian immersion studies (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982). Regardless of the reason for this focus on vocabulary, there were mixed results in these studies as to the actual effect that L2 learning has on L1 vocabulary.

Lambert and Tucker (1972) found that there was no significant difference between the achievements of the experimental and the control groups by the end of their study as the experimental group demonstrated the same level of competency in their L1 as their peers who did not engage in L2 learning in terms of written vocabulary. Whilst Lambert and Tucker were not convinced of a direct improvement at the end of their study, they did suggest that as a result of students' L2 learning the experimental group may have developed superior skills when it comes to comparing the similarities and differences between the two languages and that this may enable the immersion students to later increase their vocabulary (Bournot-Trites & Tellowitz, 2002; Lambert & Tucker). Contrastingly, Swain and Lapkin (1982) concluded that L2 immersion students demonstrated a wider range of vocabulary than their peers who did not engage in the immersion program.

Despite the fact that Lambert and Tucker (1972) did not observe a positive effect in their study, they did consider the possibility that students would come to experience positive effects as a result of further exposure to L2. This complements Swain and Lapkin's (1982) view that L2 learning has a positive effect on L1 vocabulary. Further to this, vocabulary acquisition was not directly measured in Keckes and Papp's (2000) study, but an increase in vocabulary may be assumed as without displaying a range of vocabulary participants would have been unable to use sentences of the complexity required for the researchers to establish that L2 learning did indeed have a positive effect on L1. The combined results from these studies are inconclusive about the effect of L2 learning on L1 vocabulary, and this makes generalisation of these results to other contexts difficult, meaning that further research into the effect of L2 learning on L1 vocabulary is required.

Grammar and Syntax

In the relevant literature the terms syntax and grammar are used inconsistently, which has the potential to cause some confusion. For the purposes of this literature review, the term grammar has been identified as a broad term which encompasses sentence structure and word formations (including verb tenses, regular and irregular plurals) as discussed in Humphrey, Droga and Feez (2012). Syntax, which refers specifically to sentence structure, falls under the broad term of grammar.

Grammar was not a key focus in Lambert and Tucker's (1972) study and thus no specific evidence was produced to indicate that there was either a positive or negative effect in this area on L1 grammar skills. Grammatical errors in L1 were analysed by Lambert and Tucker in this study although no conclusion was made as to the effect of the L2 learning on these. Despite the fact that the experimental groups' education was in L2 (French), these participants still spoke their L1 (English) at home so a direct connection between the language of instruction and achievement in L1 could not be ascertained.

Swain and Lapkin (1982), on the other hand, found through their study that the immersion students were more proficient in L1 grammar than their peers who did not engage in the L2 immersion program. According to Bournot-Trites and Tellowitz (2002), this led Swain and Lapkin to conclude that once literacy skills have been established in one language they are transferable to another.

Keckes and Papp's (2000) study, like that of Swain and Lapkin (1982), addressed the effect that L2 has on L1 grammar. Keckes and Papp focused on analysing the grammatical subset of syntax to establish whether L2 learning had an effect on participants' L1, concluding that L2 learning has a positive effect on L1 abilities. Keckes and Papp also noted that the degree to which this effect is experienced by participants depends on the amount of instruction time in L2 (the greater the exposure to L2, the more benefit there is for L1).

The findings from these studies strongly suggest that L2 learning has a positive effect on L1 grammar, thus increasing the likelihood that participants in this Southern Tasmanian context will also perceive that students experience positive effects to their L1 grammar.

Punctuation

Punctuation is not an area widely addressed in literature regarding the effect of L2 learning on L1. Punctuation was not an aspect that was assessed in Lambert and Tucker's (1972) study of the effects of L2 learning on L1 skills, nor was it specifically addressed in the study by Keckes and Papp (2000). It is possible, however, that punctuation did feature in Keckes and Papp's study as successful use of embedded clauses often relies on correct punctuation and without this Keckes and Papp may have been unable to draw their conclusion that L2 learning had a positive effect on L1 skills. Consequently, it may be inferred that participants demonstrated an appropriate and effective use of punctuation in this study. In contrast to these two studies, Swain and Lapkin (1982) claimed that L2 students

showed superior punctuation skills compared to students who did not engage in L2 learning, in addition to establishing that L2 students demonstrated increased proficiency in vocabulary and grammar in their L1.

Given the sparse number of studies that claim there to be a positive effect on L1 punctuation as a result of L2 learning, this researcher believes that it is unlikely that participants in this context will perceive there to be a positive effect on punctuation similar to that concluded by Swain and Lapkin (1982). Instead, it is probable that the results will align with those of Lambert and Tucker (1972) and Keckes and Papp (2000), reinforcing the idea that L2 learning has no effect on L1 punctuation.

Awareness of Language

In addition to the effects noted by researchers in the studies discussed above, Australian-based research suggests that positive effects can also be experienced by students who engage in limited L2 learning. Yelland et al., (1993) found through their study that the marginal bilingual students out-performed their monolingual peers in the area of word awareness by the end of their first year of schooling. In their second year of schooling, however, this advantage was not retained and monolingual students were exhibiting comparable levels of word awareness to the marginal bilingual students. Despite the fact that the marginal bilingual students' increased competency was not maintained, Yelland et al., argue that their findings illustrate that limited exposure to L2 can still result in benefits to L1.

Similarly, Worsley and Harbon (2001) concluded that students did develop an improved awareness and understanding of language after engaging in a unit of work involving L2 learning. Worsley and Harbon attributed this development to the discussions that occurred between the teacher and students around the similarities and differences between L2 (Japanese) and L1 (English) in the context of the focus text.

From these two studies, it is possible that these results are generalisable and that other Australian students will experience similar benefits as a result of limited L2 instruction. It is difficult, however, to predict whether the results of this study will be comparable with those of Yelland et al., and Worsley and Harbon as this study focuses on L2 learning in the high-school context, as opposed to the early childhood and primary school contexts.

Methods of Instruction

Participants in the studies by Lambert and Tucker (1972), Swain and Lapkin (1982) and Keckes and Papp (2000) engaged in L2 learning through immersion. This is a common approach to L2 learning as it is seen to be an authentic application for language in schools (Bostwick, 2011; Lo Bianco, 2007). Immersion learning does not mean that 100% of the curriculum needs to be conducted in L2, thus L1 can be used to enhance both the curriculum content and the L2 instruction that occurs through immersion learning (Bostwick). Immersion learning is not a commonly used strategy for L2 learning in Australia, and consequently methods of instruction are applied in L2 classes that may not be common in immersive contexts (Lo Bianco, 2007).

In non-immersion classes in Australia there is a focus on communicating and understanding in the language classroom (ACARA, 2015c). It is difficult to source information about the techniques that are used to address these foci within the language classroom, although from personal experience it is common for schools to use a combination of L2 text books, audio clips, film, games and online resources to meet the curriculum requirements. In addition to these, direct instruction is documented as being beneficial for L2 learning, particularly in the area of vocabulary, as it can be used to make the links between L2 and L1 explicit (Folse, 2004; Pufahl, Rhodes and Christian, 2001).

The variation in these methods of instruction potentially influences the efficacy of second language instruction in these contexts. Consequently, it is important to consider the methods of instruction used in individual cases as research is conducted.

Implications for Research

These studies suggest that the benefits of L2 learning on L1 far outweigh the negatives in these researchers' minds, leaving little room to entertain the suggestion that L2 learning has a negative impact on L1 (Bull, 1995; Odin, 1989). It can also be surmised that the greater the amount of instruction time in L2, the greater the benefit on L1. In the studies by Swain and Lapkin (1982) and Keckes and Papp (2000) it is clear that the researchers found immersion learning to yield the greatest results on participants' L1, while Lambert and Tucker (1972) believe that yet more L2 learning needed to be undertaken before their participants will experience any positive effects. This idea is, in part, supported by the work of Yelland et al., (1993) and Worsley and Harbon (2001) as participants in both studies only experienced improvements to L1 in the form of improved awareness, which is possibly linked to the limited instruction time - one hour per week and one unit respectively.

Given the variety of results in these studies, it is difficult to know which results, if any, will also be true in the context of Southern Tasmanian high-school students. It is this reason that increases the relevance of this research project. Will teachers perceive that high-school students in Southern Tasmania experience similar benefits to L1 word awareness as the Australian based primary school studies by Yelland et al., (1993) and Worsley and Harbon (2001)? Will students experience benefits to grammar, vocabulary and punctuation similar to the studies by Swain and Lapkin (1982) and Keckes and Papp (2000), despite the fact that Southern Tasmanian high-school students do not engage in an immersive language program? Or will Southern Tasmanian high-school English teachers perceive that their students experience an entirely different effect on their L1 as a result of their L2 instruction?

In order to answer the research question and establish what effect high-school students in Southern Tasmania might experience as a result of their L2 learning, these prior studies are used to inform the investigation. Factors such as language studied, length of instruction time, method of instruction and previously identified areas of benefit in L1 will all be key in establishing what effect Southern Tasmanian teachers perceive that their students experience as a result of their L2 instruction.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter addresses the process through which the research question (what effects do Southern Tasmanian English teachers perceive second language learning to have on high-school students' first language English skills) is to be investigated.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical perspective that informs this research is the language transfer theory. Similar to Thorndike and Woodworth's theory of learning transfer where learning in one context impacts on learning in another context, language transfer refers to learning in one language influencing learning in another language (Bull, 1995; Odin, 1989; Perkins & Salomon, 1992). This theory specifically addresses the idea that learning that has occurred in L1 can be transferred to L2, particularly in the areas of discourse, semantics and syntax (Odin). Research on this theory has suggested that not all effects of language transfer are positive, and that the possibility exists for language transfer to potentially undermine learning and thus have a negative effect (Bull; Odin).

Given this perceived transfer of learning from L1 to L2, it is not unreasonable to think that the transfer might work in reverse – that learning in L2 could transfer to L1. This idea has potential given that languages are continually evolving and thus the learning of a language, even your L1, never truly ceases (Birner, 2012). This idea of a reverse transfer is supported by the multi-competency framework (Cook, 2012). Cook, the developer of this framework, argues that the languages one person speaks belong to an interconnected system within the mind, thus if L1 and L2 learning are interconnected then transfer in both directions is possible. It is this idea of a reverse language transfer that forms the theoretical perspective for this research.

The studies conducted by Keckes and Papp (2000), Yelland, Pollard & Mercuri (1993) and Swain and Lapkin (1982) each support this idea of a reverse language transfer. The findings that grammar, vocabulary and punctuation learning in L2 can influence and improve understanding of the same concept in participants' L1 indicates that not only does a language transfer occur in the opposite direction than was originally proposed, but that it actually has a positive effect (Keckes & Papp, 2000; Odin, 1989; Swain & Lapkin, 1982).

Methodology

A qualitative approach to research has been selected to gather the information about teacher perceptions that is required to answer the research question and establish whether a reverse language transfer occurs in the Southern Tasmanian context. The use of this approach allows for the researcher to visit participants in their natural setting and to collect data through the use of qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2014). Given the time limitation, only six participants are required to engage in interviews, with each interview anticipated to be between 20 and 30 minutes in length. These are conducted on a one-to-one basis (unless otherwise requested), using open questions to prompt conversation surrounding the teacher's perceptions of the effect of L2 learning on high school students' L1 English skills.

The data collected during these interviews are then analysed according to the themes that emerge (Creswell, 2014; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). The nature of qualitative research is such that ideas may change or evolve as data collection uncovers previously unconsidered possibilities or factors for exploration (Creswell). Thus, when using this type of research method, it is important for the researcher to have an idea of what they are looking for, but remain open to other possibilities. As with all research, it remains necessary for the researcher to consider how personal biases will influence the interpretation of data (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Potential participants include any Southern Tasmanian high-school English teachers who teach in schools where students also participate in L2 study. Southern Tasmanian high-school principals will receive a letter of invitation (Appendix A) via email explaining the research and what is required from each participant. If principals are agreeable, they are asked to distribute a participant information sheet (Appendix B) to high-school English teachers at their school (Creswell, 2014). This information sheet outlines the purpose of the research (what exactly is being investigated and anticipated outcomes), as well as the role of the participant in this research project. The researcher's contact details are also included so that interested teachers can make contact to ask for further information and/or to volunteer to participate in the qualitative interviews. Interviews are organised once teachers have indicated their desire to participate, and the interviews are conducted after each participant has signed the consent form (Appendix C).

Ethical Considerations

In order to gain permission to conduct this research, the University of Tasmania's ethics application process must be adhered to. This process involves completing the University of Tasmania's ethics application form, outlining the key components of the research including reasons for research, participant sample and research methods, before submitting the application to University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for review. This process has been successfully completed and this study, H0014912, has been approved by the committee.

There are no significant ethical concerns associated with this research project. The research question is not one that touches on sensitive issues, no identifying features (such as the name of the participant or the school) are used, participation is voluntary and no means of deception is used, therefore this approach is ethically sound (Creswell, 2014).

Research Instrument

The qualitative interviews that are used to elicit participants' perceptions are guided by a set of questions that draw on key themes noted by prominent researchers in this area (Keckes & Papp, 2000; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland et al., 1993). These questions focus on what effect teachers have noticed (if any), with specific attention to the effect that L2 learning might have had on students' vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and word awareness:

- What second language(s) do your students study?
- How many hours of class time per week do students engage in their second language study?
- Do you know what methods of instruction are used in these second language classes? If so, please explain.
- How do you perceive the second language students' English skills to be compared with students who do not learn a second language?
- Have you noticed any effects (positive or negative) that students' second language learning has had on their English skills? If so, what form do these effects take?
- Are there any areas where these second language students outperform their peers?
- Are there any areas where these students are outperformed by their peers?
- What effect (if any) do you believe students' second language learning has had on their English vocabulary/grammar/punctuation/awareness of language?

Limitations

Four significant limitations are associated with this research project: time, sample, research instrument and researcher bias.

Time.

The first limitation is the restricted time period in which this research is to be conducted. The short amount of time limits the amount of data that can be collected, and this will make it difficult to make an absolute conclusion. Consequently, the results will most likely only give an indication of whether teachers perceive students to experience any effect in L1 as a result of their L2 learning.

Sample.

The second limitation is the sample that is used. Participants are chosen using a variation of non-probability sampling where participants are selected based on convenience (Creswell, 2014). Teachers will receive information about this research project from their principal and interested participants will contact the researcher directly and the research will progress from there. This process of seeking volunteers may result in a participant demographic that is non-representative of the population, although it is not anticipated that this will negatively affect the results as the teachers themselves are not the focus but rather their perceptions.

Research instrument.

A third limitation is likely to occur in relation to the instrument used to collect data. Data are collected during a qualitative interview with each participant, and these interviews are guided by a set of questions. The guiding questions may have the potential to limit the results as they may not uncover all of the information that the participant may have to offer in regards to the research question. These questions have been designed as open questions to encourage participants to consider their responses without significant restrictions, but even though this precaution has been taken, the possibility remains that some significant contribution may be unintentionally restricted.

Researcher bias.

The fourth limitation is researcher bias. It is possible that the researcher may subconsciously discount certain data as particular results are expected, but by being aware of this possibility it becomes possible to prepare for this and approach the data with a broader perspective (Creswell, 2014).

Delimitations

Given the restricted time period in which this project is to be completed, two delimitations have been applied to the project to enable its completion within the allocated time. The first delimitation is the concentrated population from which the sample is selected: high-school English teachers in Southern Tasmania. The second delimitation is the number of participants that are selected: six participants (two from Independent high-schools and four from Government high-schools). By looking at this combination of schools a generalisable picture of the benefits of southern Tasmanian high-school students' L2 learning can be formed.

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to minimise any inconvenience to participants, these interviews are conducted in each teacher's own school setting. There are also some benefits associated with this choice of location as there is likely to be less noise interfering with the interview, and participants should be able to focus more on the topic in their own teaching context (Creswell, 2014).

With permission from the interviewees, these qualitative interviews are to be recorded. This will enable the researcher to participate more wholly in the interview process, as less time would need to be spent taking copious notes. In addition to this, recording the qualitative interviews will hopefully allow for the data to be more accurately recorded than

might otherwise be the case when taking handwritten notes and relying on memory. Should the participants withhold their permission for the interview to be recorded, then the interview will continue albeit at a potentially slower pace as the researcher attempts to record important notes by hand.

Each of the qualitative interviews is transcribed by the researcher and the data will then be analysed according to the key themes and ideas that emerge in response to each of the guiding questions. Any identifiable information, such as names, are removed from the transcripts during the transcribing process and replaced with pseudonyms or numbers, for example: School 1, Teacher 1. With this method of transcription, it is necessary to acknowledge that there may be an element of bias, but being aware of this potential bias will assist the researcher in transcribing and analysing the recorded interviews more accurately (Creswell, 2014). Despite the potential of transcriber bias and the time-consuming nature of the transcription process, the researcher believes that it is beneficial to transcribe the interviews without assistance as it will result in a better understanding of the content.

The information that is drawn from each interview is compared to the answers, ideas and themes that emerge from the qualitative interviews with the other participants. The process for analysing the data is as follows:

Step 1: Key ideas from each interview are noted.

Step 2: Ideas are compared between interviews and recurring themes are noted and given priority.

Step 3: Using this list of ideas and themes as a guide, each interview is revisited to determine if the idea/theme in question occurs (as it might have been missed during the initial identification phase).

Step 4: These themes are then sorted into three broad categories: positive effect, negative effect and no effect. Themes are then sorted into sub-categories that reflect the areas of effect that were anticipated (as identified in previous studies), and new categories are created as required.

Step 5: From analysis of these categories and sub-categories a conclusion is made that answers the question: What effect do Southern Tasmanian English teachers perceive L2 learning to have on high-school students' L1 English skills.

Through the use of this methodological approach, teachers' perceptions about the effects of L2 learning on L1 English skills can be uncovered and used to answer the research question.

Chapter 4: Results

Six English teachers from four different high-schools in Southern Tasmania participated in this research project. Two of these participants teach in Independent Schools and four teach in Government schools.

Languages

In the schools that are represented, students had the opportunity to choose from nine different languages (four Asian and five European) to study. Amongst the schools represented, French is the most commonly taught language (in three schools) followed by Chinese (in two schools). The distribution of these languages is shown in Figure 2.

Language	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Arabic			✓*	
Chinese	✓✓		✓	
Croatian			✓*	
French	✓✓		✓	✓
German			✓*	
Indonesian	✓✓			
Italian			✓	
Japanese		✓✓		
Spanish			✓*	

Figure 2. Second languages offered in focus schools.

✓✓ = compulsory throughout high-school

✓ = compulsory up to Grade 8

✓* = available on request

Methods of Instruction

All of the methods of instruction used in participating schools are detailed in Figure 3.

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Direct Instruction	✓		✓	✓
Native Teacher	✓		✓	
Culture Focus (including film and cooking)	✓	✓	✓	
Competitions (such as Alliance Français)	✓			
Set Texts	✓		✓	
Community Projects	✓			
Dialogue	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work sheets		✓		✓
Games	✓	✓	✓	✓
Songs	✓	✓		✓
Computer Games and Online Resources			✓	✓
Cassettes			✓	

Figure 3. Methods of instruction used in language classes.

Instruction Time

The instruction time in these languages varies considerably between the schools.

Figure 4 (over page) shows a comparison of the second language instruction time for each school in minutes per week.

School	Chinese	French	Italian	Indonesian	Japanese	Additional (Arabic, Croatian, German, Spanish)	TOTAL Instruction Time per week (minutes)
1	180	150	0	150	0	0	480
2	0	0	0	0	50	0	50
3	50			0	0	50 (optional)	50 - 100
4	0	50	0	0	0	0	50

Figure 4. School comparison of second language instruction (minutes per week).

Direct Comparison

The response to the question “how do you perceive the second language students’ English skills to be compared with students who do not learn a second language” was overwhelmingly positive. This is shown in Figure 5.

Participant	Good	Bad
1	✓	
2	✓	
3	✓	
4	✓	
5	✓	
6	✓	

Figure 5. Teacher perceptions of L2 students’ L1 skills compared to non-language students.

Effects

When questioned about the effects that L2 learning has on L1 skills, participants noted that there were a number of areas where there is a positive effect or no effect as a result of L2 learning. None of the teacher participants perceived L2 learning to have a negative

effect on L1 English skills in these interviews. These results are shown in Figure 6, with perceived effects corresponding to the Participant(s) (numbered 1-6) who identified it.

Effect	1	2	3	4	5	6
Grammar		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Syntax	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vocabulary		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Punctuation				✓	✓	
Spelling						✓
Pronunciation						✓
Awareness of Language	✓			✓	✓	✓
Cultural Awareness	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Improved Memory			✓			
Improved Self-Discipline or Work Ethic	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Confidence		✓	✓			

Figure 6. Effects of L2 learning identified by each participant.

✓ = Positive Effect

✗ = Negative Effect

(Blank Square) = No Effect

Areas Where Language Students Outperform Non-Language Students

Participants' responses to the question "are there any areas where these second language students outperform their peers?" were mixed, although none of the participants specified any curriculum areas. Participants' responses are listed in Figure 7 (over page).

Participant	Response
1	Question not applicable – all students study second languages so a comparison cannot be made.
2	Question not applicable – all students study second languages so a comparison cannot be made.
3	“I couldn’t comment – I think in a high-school setting it doesn’t really count.”
4	“I think there are, but it would be hard to say that ... it would be very difficult to say that that’s the reason.”
5	“Yes, but they’re good students to start with so it’s hard to say that L2 study is the reason.”
6	“It’s difficult to compare L2 students’ performance with non-L2 students’ because those who study a second language voluntarily are the high-flyers anyway and always tend to outperform their peers regardless of discipline.”

Figure 7. Areas where L2 students outperform their peers.

Areas Where Non-Language Students Outperform Language Students

None of the participating teachers could give an example where non-language students demonstrate an ability or competency superior to that of their second language learning peers. Participants’ responses are detailed in Figure 8.

Participant	Response
1	Question not applicable – Participant declined to respond.
2	Question not applicable – Participant declined to respond.
3	No areas where non-language students outperform L2 students were noted.
4	Declined to answer directly, instead commenting that there were many other factors to consider in order to answer the question decisively.
5	No areas where non-language students outperform L2 students were noted.
6	No areas where non-language students outperform L2 students were noted.

Figure 8. Areas where non-language students outperform L2 students.

Specific Links to Previous Research

Grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and word awareness were the four key themes that prominent researchers noted in their research of the effects of L2 learning on L1 (Keckes & Papp, 2000; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland et al., 1993). Consequently, these areas were specifically addressed in this research and the results of these questions are outlined below.

Grammar.

When asked specifically what effect L2 learning had on L1 English grammar, the majority of participants (five out of six) responded that there was a positive effect. Participant 1 was the only participant who did not perceive there to be an effect on L1 grammar. This is shown in Figure 9.

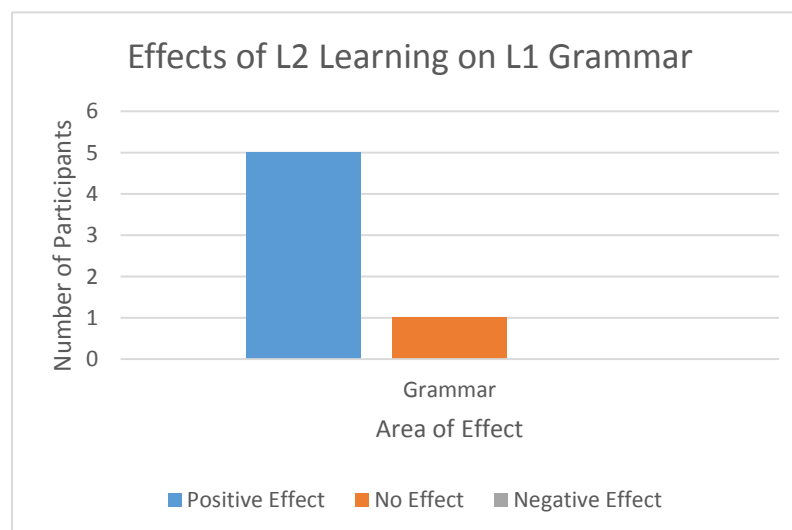


Figure 9. Effects of L2 learning on L1 grammar and syntax.

Punctuation.

Participants' responses were divided when asked whether L2 learning had an effect on students' L1 punctuation. Only two of the participants (Participants 4 and 5) perceived there to be a positive effect on punctuation while the remaining participants perceived L2 learning

to have no effect on students' punctuation. Figure 10 shows this divide in responses on the effect of L2 learning on L1 punctuation.

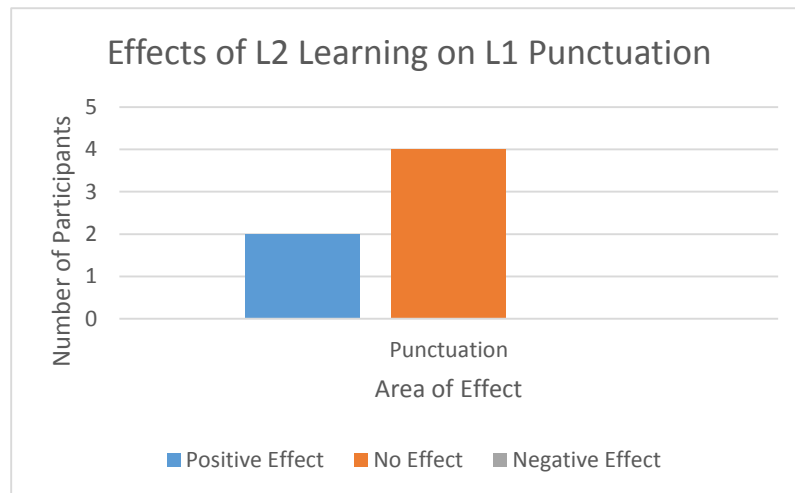


Figure 10. Effects of L2 learning on L1 punctuation.

Vocabulary.

Five out of the six teacher participants interviewed believe that L2 learning has a positive effect L1 vocabulary. Participant 1 was the only participant to perceive L2 learning to have no effect on students' L1 vocabulary. No negative effects of L2 learning on L1 vocabulary were perceived by the participants. The distribution of effects perceived by participants are shown in Figure 11.

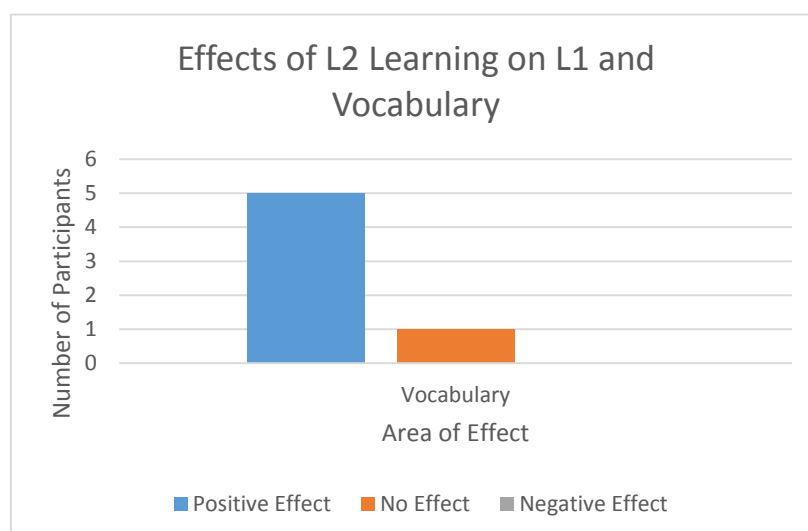


Figure 11. Effects of L2 learning on L1 vocabulary.

Awareness of language.

Four of the six participants indicated that an improved awareness of language had been observed among L2 students, with only Participant 2 and Participant 3 not observing this positive effect. A comparison of the effect on awareness of language as a result of L2 learning is shown in Figure 12.

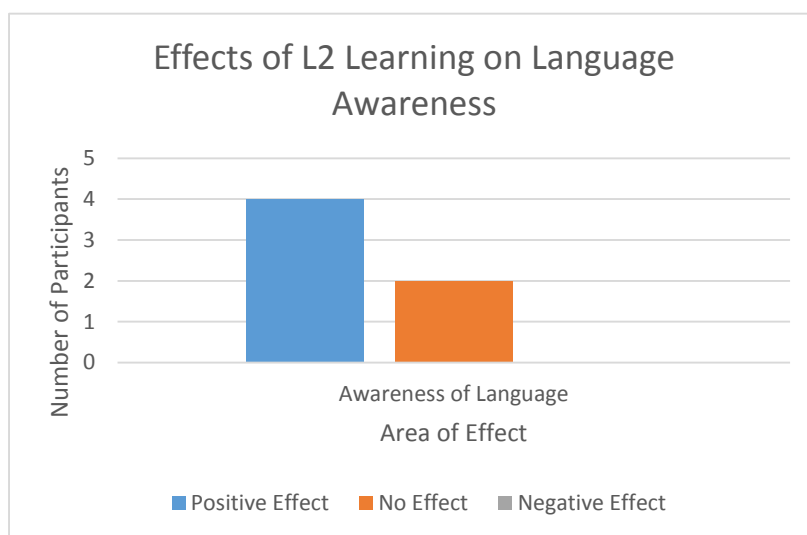


Figure 12. Effect of L2 on language awareness.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This research has found that the majority of participating teachers perceive second language learning to have a positive effect on students' first language English skills. The data collected can now be used to answer the key questions that prompted the need for research as well as the primary research question: What effects do Southern Tasmanian English teachers perceive second language learning to have on high-school students' first language English skills?

It is a fact that not all students in Southern Tasmania have the opportunity to learn a second language at primary school (Harbon, 2012). Consequently, the first time that some students are exposed to L2 learning is when they enter high-school. This is in contrast to the participants in Lambert and Tucker's (1972) study as well as those in Swain and Lapkin's (1982) study who were of primary school age when they began their L2 learning using an immersive approach. Similarly, the Australian based studies by Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1993) and Worsley and Harbon (2001) focused on primary school aged students, although in these studies students were only exposed to limited L2 instruction (60 minutes per week and a single unit spread over 11 weeks respectively). Each of these studies concluded that students experienced varying benefits in L1 from this young age despite the vast differences in instruction time. Similar to this study, Keckes and Papp (2000) focussed on learning in the high-school context and concluded that L2 learning resulted in participants experiencing positive effects in their L1 (Hungarian). The fact that students in this Southern Tasmanian context are high-school aged and do not engage in immersion learning means that the results from the aforementioned studies are not necessarily applicable, thus the researcher sought to answer the question: at this later stage of development, do students still experience benefits to their L1 literacy skills?

Effects Experienced by High-School Students

From the data collected it is apparent that the majority of participating teachers perceive L2 learning to have an overall positive effect on students' L1 English skills. When asked how they perceive L2 students' L1 skills to be compared to students who do not study a second language, every participant responded positively with participants citing a greater awareness of language as one key reason for this positive view. Further to this, when asked directly whether they had noticed any positive effects, every participant named at least two positive effects that were linked specifically to English skills. These effects are listed in Figure 6.

Only one participant (Participant 1) was unconvinced of the linguistic benefits of L2 learning on L1 when asked specifically to consider the effects on grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. After teaching English for over 20 years, a lack of experience cannot be given as the reason for this participant's view of L2 learning. Instead, it is more likely that Participant 1, who teaches in an Independent school where second language learning is compulsory throughout every year of high-school, finds it difficult to comment as there are no non-language students to compare the L2 students' skills with. Despite the uncertainty that was portrayed during the interview, Participant 1 did volunteer that there were benefits to L2 learning. While most of these positive effects were non-linguistic (such as cultural awareness and improved work ethic), Participant 1 did note that students displayed a greater awareness of language and improved syntax, and attributed these positive effects to students' L2 learning.

Interestingly, participants seemed keen to emphasise additional benefits that students experienced as a result of their engagement with L2 learning that are not categorised as linguistic benefits. Improved work ethic (Participants 1, 2, 3 and 5), improved memory (Participant 3), confidence (Participants 2 and 3) and cultural awareness (Participants 1, 2, 4

and 5) were all frequently cited non-linguistic benefits that participating teachers have observed in their students. Participant 4 also made the comment that this second language learning allows students to gain a better awareness of their place in the world, which is apt in a time where global citizenship is a key educational goal in Australia (Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008). Regardless of whether linguistic benefits are experienced in L1 as a result of L2 learning, these non-linguistic effects provide a strong argument for continuing second language instruction in schools.

Given the number of positive effects that participating teachers perceive L2 students to experience, both in L1 and generally, it is clear that beginning L2 learning in high-school does not prevent students in Southern Tasmania from experiencing many of the benefits associated with L2 learning.

Specific Linguistic Effects

The four significant areas of effect of L2 learning on L1 skills addressed in the studies by Lambert and Tucker (1972), Swain and Lapkin (1982), Keckes and Papp (2000), Yelland et al., (1993) and Worsley and Harbon (2001) were grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and awareness of language. Each of these areas has been used to guide this research and provide a focus for participants (at the end of each interview) for what areas of L1 they might have observed students experience effects in after engaging in L2 learning.

Grammar.

Previous research into the effects of L2 learning on L1 skills by Swain and Lapkin (1982) and Keckes and Papp (2000) found that L2 learning had a positive effect on grammar in both cases. The results from this study are similar to those findings as each of the six participants identified at some point in their interview that L2 learning has a positive effect

on their students' L1 grammar. When asked specifically what effect L2 learning had on L1 grammar, the majority of participants echoed the positive views of the effects on grammar that they shared earlier in the interview. The reasons attributed to why L2 learning had a positive effect on L1 grammar centred on the increased focus that grammar received in L2 lessons (Participants 2, 4 and 5) and the fact that L2 students developed a greater appreciation of grammar as a result of their engagement in L2 (Participant 6).

It is important to note, however, that not every participant perceived there to be an overall positive effect on L1 grammar. When asked specifically about the effect that L2 has on L1 grammar, Participant 1 stated that no effect had been noted, explaining that this was likely because the high-school students' had not reached the level of competency necessary for a reverse language transfer to occur. Although, as previously discussed, Participant 1 may not have been able to compare effects as every student at Participant 1's school participates in L2 learning throughout high-school. Despite holding this view generally about the effects of L2 on L1 grammar, Participant 1 did spontaneously state that a positive effect on students' syntax had been observed – an area of grammar that all other participants also believed was positively influenced by L2.

This perception of positive effects on at least one aspect of grammar by all teacher participants adds to the findings of Swain and Lapkin (1982) and Keckes and Papp (2000) as this finding strongly suggests that high-school students in Southern Tasmania experience benefits in their L1 grammar after undertaking L2 study. Furthermore, this study supports the findings of Keckes and Papp (2000), who reported that their high-school aged participants experienced particular benefits to L1 syntax after engaging in L2 learning, as 100% of participants observed a positive effect on students' syntax. Even Participant 1, who did not observe a general positive effect on grammar (in areas such as verb conjugation), believes that students' syntax improved as a result of their L2 learning.

Reasons for this improvement appear to be linked to the additional emphasis that is placed on explicitly learning sentence structure and the technical terms associated with the explicit teaching of grammar in L2 lessons (Pufahl, Rhodes and Christian, 2001). Participant 5 (who also has experience as an L2 teacher) spoke openly about this view, saying: “as a language teacher, every single day you say the words *noun, verb, adjective, present tense, past* and in English you don’t”. Participant 4 (who does not have any experience as an L2 teacher) also shared this view, stating that by reinforcing these key grammatical terms in L2 learning, students’ L1 understandings can improve. Participant 4 has witnessed this positive effect in the classroom through an increase in responses from L2 students when discussing how tenses change within a single piece of work.

Participant 6 and Participant 3 both identified an improvement in L1 syntax as they have both observed that their students who learn a second language are able to communicate more efficiently in English. Participant 6 claims that L2 students’ sentence structure is both more meaningful and sophisticated, while Participant 3 believes that L2 students take greater care in constructing sentences. This aligns with the findings of Keckes and Papp (2000) who established that the L2 students in their study were capable of creating sentences of greater grammatical complexity than their monolingual peers. The interesting difference here is that students in Southern Tasmania have experienced these benefits despite not engaging in any immersion style learning.

Although not frequently cited by participants in this study, verb conjugation and identifying the roots of words were acknowledged by Participant 2 as two areas where L2 students seem to have experienced positive effects. Participant 2 stated that L2 learning assisted students to identify the relationships between words, and that this reverse language transfer is particularly beneficial as understanding the roots of words is a key component of the English curriculum in high-school (ACARA, 2015a). Participant 3 also commented that

studying a European-based L2 appears to result in improved verb conjugation (particularly in the case of different tenses) in L1. These positive effects identified by Participant 2 and Participant 3 correspond with Swain and Lapkin's (1982) conclusion that once rules have been learned they can be applied to other languages, although, considering that only two participants identified these positive effects, more research needs to be done in this area before these results can be generalised.

Similar to the studies of Keckes and Papp (2000) and Swain and Lapkin (1982), this study demonstrates that positive effects in L1 grammar are perceived by teachers to be experienced by students, particularly in the area of syntax. Furthermore, the lack of negative effects identified by participating teachers suggests that no negative transfer to L1 grammar skills occurs as a result of L2 learning.

Punctuation.

There is a general perception amongst participating teachers that L2 learning has no effect on L1 punctuation. This is contrary to the findings of Swain and Lapkin (1982) who reportedly found that their student participants' punctuation improved as a result of their L2 learning.

Of the six participating teachers, only two participants (Participant 4 and Participant 5) believe that L2 learning has a positive effect on L1 punctuation. Participant 4 in particular believes that there is a positive effect in this area and attributes this to the additional focus that punctuation is given in L2 studies. Participant 4 considers that a greater awareness of language in general contributes to improved punctuation, specifying that: "studying another language makes you want to know your own". Participant 5, like Participant 4, considers that there has been an improvement in students' punctuation and similarly attributes this to the additional class time that is spent addressing the area. Both Participant 4 and Participant 5

suggest there is an increased benefit in punctuation if L2 is a European language (as opposed to an Asian language).

The majority of participants (Participants 1, 2, 3 and 6), however, believe that L2 learning has no effect on students' ability to punctuate correctly. Participant 2 considers that sophisticated punctuation is linked to students' comprehension level in the language in question. Participant 2, who teaches at a low-socio economic high-school, used the example of one student who struggles in English class to illustrate this perspective. This student can read, but does so without any great level of comprehension and Participant 2 believes that this affects the student's ability to understand punctuation as without understanding the context of what is being read, the student does not know, for example, how to pre-empt articles of punctuation such as question marks. Participant 2 has not observed any cases where L2 learning has improved students L1 punctuation, nor any cases where there has been a negative impact. The remaining three participants (Participants 1, 3 and 6) offered no explanation for why they perceived there to be no effect on L1 punctuation, but merely stated that they perceive there to be no effect.

From this information, it appears that, generally, Tasmanian high-school students experience no effect in L1 punctuation from L2 learning. Whilst this finding somewhat contradicts that of Swain and Lapkin (1982), the researcher argues that the relevance of punctuation in identifying the effect that L2 learning has on L1 English is not as important as effects such as grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, given the lack of research done in the area of L2 learning on L1 punctuation, the significance of punctuation appears somewhat diminished.

Vocabulary.

Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the effect that L2 learning has on L1 vocabulary, with five out of six participants perceiving a positive effect to occur as a result of engagement with L2. Participant 4 and Participant 5 both commented specifically on the links that can be made with vocabulary when L2 is a European language. Participant 6 elaborated on this theme and spoke at length about the effect that European L2 learning (particularly French) has on L1 English and suggests that one of the reasons for this positive effect is that many of the words in these languages are derived from Latin. Participant 2 also shared this view, stating that there are more similarities between English and European-based languages than Asian languages. Participant 2 then went on to specify that Asian languages can also have a positive effect on L1 vocabulary, but not to the same extent as European languages. Only Participant 1 did not consider students' L1 vocabulary to have improved as a result of L2 learning. No participants reported observing a negative effect on L1 vocabulary.

Teacher participants in this research, who considered there to be a positive effect on L1 vocabulary, have observed there to be two distinct ways in which this improved vocabulary manifests itself in students. The first, observed by Participants 3, 5 and 6, is the ability that students demonstrate to choose the most appropriate word to fit the scenario; the range of synonyms that students have at their disposal and can successfully apply when constructing texts. This is similar to Swain and Lapkin's (1982) findings that engagement in L2 learning can increase students' vocabulary in L1, and supports Lambert and Tucker's (1972) suggestion that second language learning can lead to a wider vocabulary.

The second way in which students' vocabulary improves is related students' ability to adopt L2 words successfully into English – words such as entrepreneur (from French) or kamikaze (from Japanese). This effect, noted by Participants 2 and 4, is strongly linked to an awareness of language and this increase in vocabulary, according to Participant 4, illustrates

how making connections between languages can be beneficial. This form of effect does not appear to have been addressed in any form of formal research prior to this.

The researcher considers these examples of positive effects on L1 vocabulary to strongly support the idea of a reverse language transfer as, unlike punctuation, improved vocabulary is not simply a result of additional practice of a shared concept. From these findings it can be generalised that high-school students in Southern Tasmania experience benefits to vocabulary similar to those established in the study by Swain and Lapkin (1982).

Awareness of language.

Lambert and Tucker (1972), Yelland et al., (1993) and Worsley and Harbon (2001) concluded in their respective studies that, regardless of whether other effects were experienced, all participants experienced a positive effect to their awareness of language. When asked about this idea, Participants 1, 4, 5 and 6 shared a similar view that their students' awareness of language had improved from their L2 study. This view is especially significant for Participant 1 who, overall, observed the fewest positive linguistic effects amongst students of all the participants.

Neither Participant 2 nor Participant 3 discussed students' awareness of language in their interviews, instead referring to more concrete ideas such as grammar and vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is likely that many other students in Southern Tasmania will experience similar benefits in terms of awareness of language from their L2 instruction, as has been found to be the case by Lambert and Tucker (1972), Yelland et al., (1993) and Worsley and Harbon (2001), and this is supported by Participants 1, 4, 5, and 6 in this study.

Instruction Time

The L2 instruction time varies considerably between the participating schools with the majority offering only 50 minutes of instruction time per week, regardless of the number of

languages offered by the school. At school 2, every student participates in 50 minutes of Japanese language learning per week throughout the school year. This is also the case for the L2 students at school 4, who participate in 50 minutes of French per week. At school 3, despite the significantly greater number of languages offered, the amount of L2 instruction time is comparable with schools 2 and 4. From the point that second language learning becomes optional at school 3 (from Grade 9 onwards), students can choose to learn either Chinese, Italian or French for one half or the entire school year. If students request to learn one of the other available languages then they would partake in an additional 50 minutes of language learning per week. School 1 is the most generous for second language instruction time, allowing 3 hours of instruction time in Chinese per week for the average Grade 9 student, as well as another 2.5 hours each for both French and Indonesian.

The number of positive effects on L1 perceived by the participating high-school English teachers appears to have no correlation with the number of minutes of L2 learning that students engage with per week. The relationship between the amount of L2 learning and the effect of this on L1 as perceived by teachers is illustrated in Figure 13.

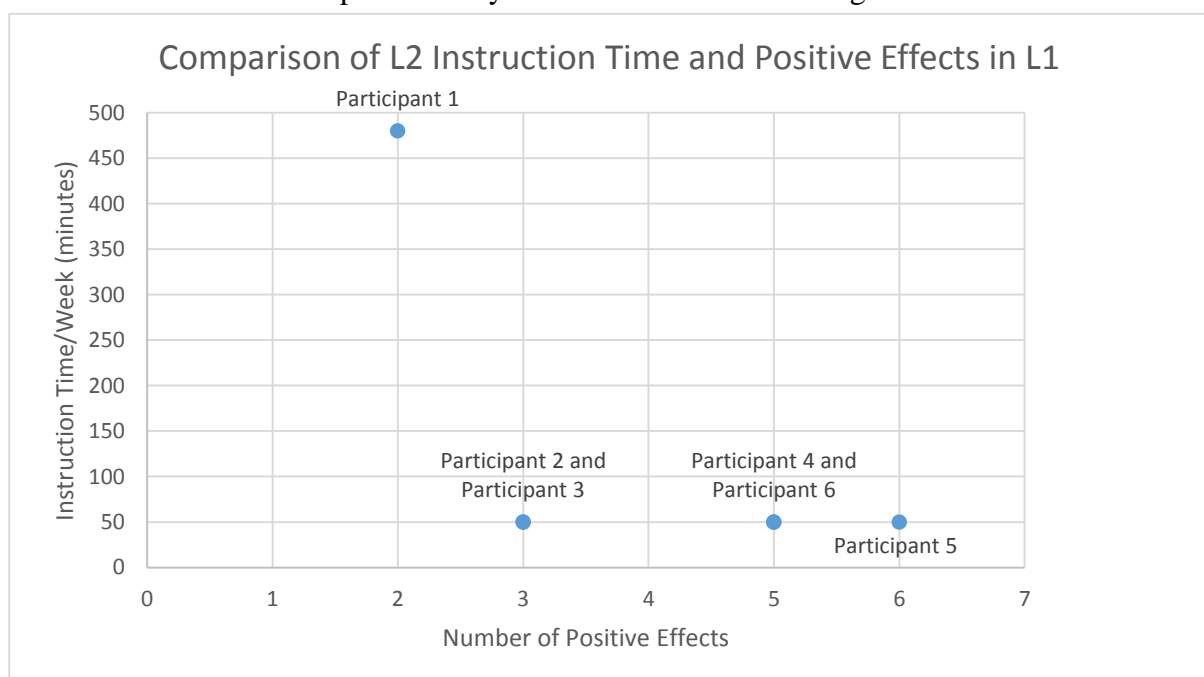


Figure 13. Comparison of L2 instruction time to positive L1 effects perceived by teachers.

In Figure 13 it is clear that Participant 1, who teaches at the school with the highest instruction time (480 minutes per week), only perceives that students experience two positive effects in L1 from L2 learning. This is one less than the number of effects that Participants 2 and 3 perceive despite the fact that students at these schools only participate in 50 minutes of L2 instruction per week. Like Participant 1, Participant 2 also teaches in a school where L2 learning is compulsory throughout high-school and it is this common factor that potentially restricts the number of positive effects that are perceived as L2 students' skills cannot be directly compared with a group of non-language students. Contrastingly, Participant 5, who teaches in a school where students also participate in 50 minutes of instruction time per week, perceived the greatest number of positive effects (six).

Thus, it appears that there is no link between the amount of L2 instruction time and the effects that teachers perceive that their students experience. Instead, the difference in this perception is more likely attributable to the opportunity (or lack of opportunity) for the participating teachers to directly compare L2 students' L1 skills with those of students who do not engage in L2 learning. This, however, cannot be said with any certainty as Participant 3 also only perceived there to be only three positive effects on L1 skills as a result of students' L2 learning and Participant 3, unlike Participants 1 and 2, had the opportunity to make a direct comparison between L2 students and non-language students. Furthermore, it must be noted that each of these three participants observed there to be effects in different areas. Consequently, the data from Participants 1 and 2 is still valid and should not be discounted because of a lack of opportunity for the participants to directly compare L2 students' L1 skills with the L1 skills of non-language students.

Relationship between L1 English and L2, and the Effect on Language Transfer

Another question that inspired this research was the question of whether the benefits experienced in L1 as a result of L2 learning vary depending on the L2 that is being studied. A

common theme throughout previous studies in this area is that, in most cases, the L2 being studied by students was a European language, with the study by Worsley and Harbon (2001) an exception. This is shown in Figure 14.

Researcher(s)	Second Language(s)	First Language	General Effect
Lambert and Tucker (1972) (Canadian)	French	English	Positive (general awareness)
Swain and Lapkin (1982) (Canadian)	French	English	Positive (punctuation and vocabulary)
Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1993) (Australian)	Italian	English	Positive (word awareness)
Keckes and Papp (2000) (Hungarian)	English French Russian	Hungarian	Positive (grammar)
Worsley and Harbon (2001) (Australian)	Japanese	English	Positive (awareness of language)

Figure 14. Type of L2 and their corresponding effects on L1.

In Southern Tasmanian high-schools, however, it is common for at least one Asian language to be offered to students in addition to European languages such as French and Italian. Given this difference, the researcher wondered whether students who studied Asian

languages would experience similar benefits to the participants in previous studies who were learning a European language.

Like the findings of these previous studies, this research found that teacher participants were generally positive of the effects that their students experienced in L1 as a result of L2 learning. One important difference, however, is the fact that three of the four participating schools offer Asian languages in addition to or instead of European languages. With the exception of Participant 1, all of the participating teachers commented specifically on the benefits of learning a European language. One possible explanation that participants cited for the positive effects in L1 are the similarities, particularly in the areas of grammar and vocabulary, that exist between English (L1) and the European languages (L2) taught in schools.

Romance or Latin-based languages include the French and Italian languages, and whilst English is technically not a Romance language like Participant 2 suggests, there is a strong Latin influence (Merritt, 2012; Wister, 2012). It is estimated that approximately 29% of the English language vocabulary is derived directly from Latin (Wister). In addition to this, a further 29% is derived from the Romance language of French (Wister). Given that over 50% of the English vocabulary is derived directly from Latin or from Romance languages, the similarities between English and other Romance languages are pronounced, theoretically making it easier for a language transfer (in either direction) to occur between these languages (Folse, 2004).

In addition to the similarities that English and many Romance languages share in the area of vocabulary, there are many grammatical similarities between English and, for example, the Romance language French (Shoebottom, 2015; Wister, 2012). Both English and French share a similar syntactical structure that is built around the subject-verb-object rule,

with this similarity potentially aiding the reverse language transfer that participants have observed (Shoebottom). Participant 4 was especially positive about the reverse language transfer that occurs in the area of syntax and believes that there is a strong relationship between the similarities between Italian, French and English and these positive effects. This view is shared by Participants 2, 3 and 5, and augmented by Participant 6's view that vocabulary is enhanced as a result of studying European languages.

In comparison to this vastly positive response about the relationship between European-based second languages and first language English, participants were less convinced of the benefits from learning an Asian language. Every participant expressed the belief that learning an Asian language yields positive results, but less adamantly than they professed the belief of the relationship to European languages. One reason for this is that the differences between English and Asian languages are significantly greater than the differences between English and European languages (Folse, 2004). For example, the differences that exist between English's subject-verb-object syntax and Japanese's subject-object-verb syntax potentially inhibits a language transfer from occurring between the two languages.

It is also the differences that exist between English and Asian languages such as Japanese that potentially restrict the transfer of vocabulary between the languages (Folse, 2004). This is not to say that a transfer of vocabulary between English and Japanese (or other Asian languages) is impossible, but rather that it does not occur as easily as it might between English and a Romance language such as French or Italian. Only Participant 2 expressed directly the belief that Asian languages are not as beneficial to L1 as European languages, saying that the effect on broadening vocabulary is not as pronounced, but is becoming more prominent. Participant 2 discussed how this is particularly the case in areas of electronic development and areas of trade (such as fresh produce), where Japanese words such as *ichigo*

(strawberry) and nashi (pear) are added to the English vocabulary. The remainder of participants did not mention Asian languages specifically, but as a result of their explicit remarks about the benefits of European languages on L1 it can be assumed that they do not consider Asian second languages to have a similar effect on L1. Links to prior research on this idea are limited, but from this study it appears that teacher participants perceive a greater effect on L1 to occur when L2 is a European language, and that this is because of the similarities that exist between European languages and English.

Extent of Effect of L2 on Students

One interesting point raised by Participants 2, 4, 5 and 6 is the idea that only academically-minded students continue with second languages from the point that L2 study becomes optional. The general perception amongst these participants was that the students who voluntarily engage in L2 study are gifted and that these students tend to excel regardless of the discipline. Despite this fact, these participants believe that L2 students experience benefits in their L1, although it is difficult to say to what extent the positive effect is a result of L2 study and how much of it is linked to the fact that these students are more intelligent than students who do not engage in L2 learning. A similar idea was also raised by Participant 1 who believes that only a certain type of person will succeed at learning a second language. Participant 3 did not raise this idea during the interview.

The fact that this idea was raised voluntarily by 5 of the 6 participants suggests that there might be a correlation between L2 students' intelligence and improved L1 skills. The implication of this idea is that the researcher cannot make a judgement on the degree that L2 learning affects L1. Nevertheless, participants have made it clear that there are effects of L2 on L1 and establishing what these effects are, as opposed to the degree of the effect, is the purpose of this investigation. The relationship between these two factors (students' intelligence and level of effect) might be an area for consideration in subsequent research.

Research Question

Considering each of these elements discussed above, it is clear that the research question “what effects do Southern Tasmanian English teachers perceive second language learning to have on high-school students’ first language English skills” has been answered. Effects perceived by Southern Tasmanian English teachers are largely positive, with significant positive linguistic effects in the area of syntax being noted by 100% of participants. Positive effects in L1 grammar (areas other than syntax), vocabulary and awareness of language were observed by the majority of participants. Positive effects on punctuation, spelling and pronunciation were also noted by participants, although the majority of participants either did not consider there to be an effect on these areas, or did not volunteer an opinion in relation to the effect on that area. A complete breakdown of the participants’ perceptions of L2 learning on L1 can be seen in Figure 15. No negative effects were noted by any of the participants.

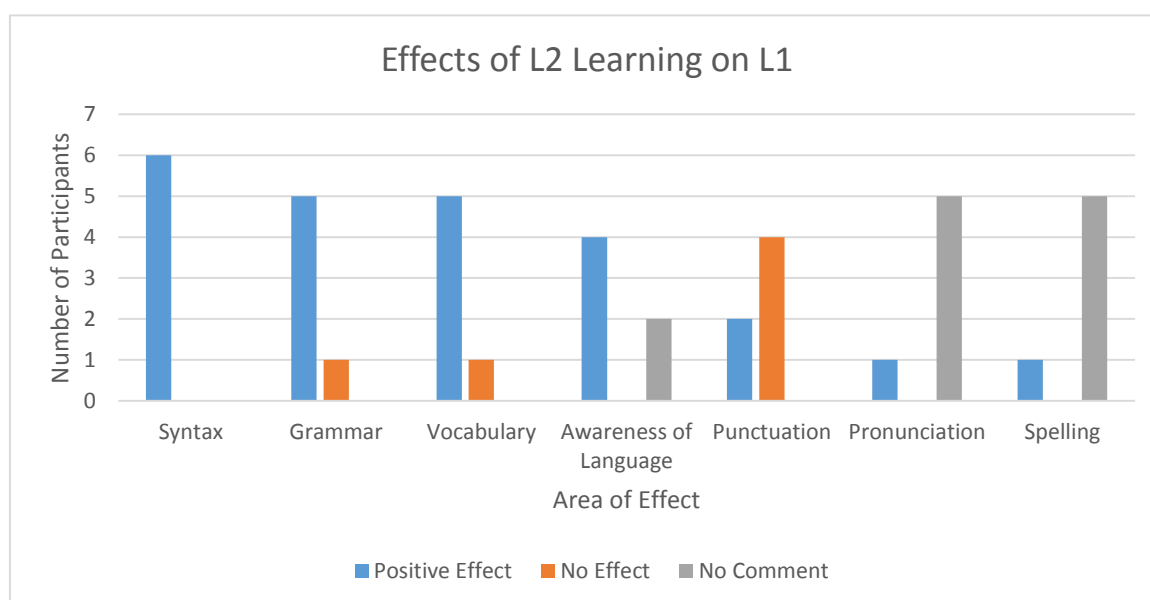


Figure 15. Effects of L2 learning on L1.

While the linguistic effects were the focus of this research, participants also perceived that some non-linguistic effects occurred as a result of students’ engagement with L2. The

most significant of these were the positive effect on both cultural awareness and work ethic that the majority of participants observed. Some participants observed that there were also non-linguistic benefits in confidence and memory. The distribution of these perceptions is illustrated in Figure 16.

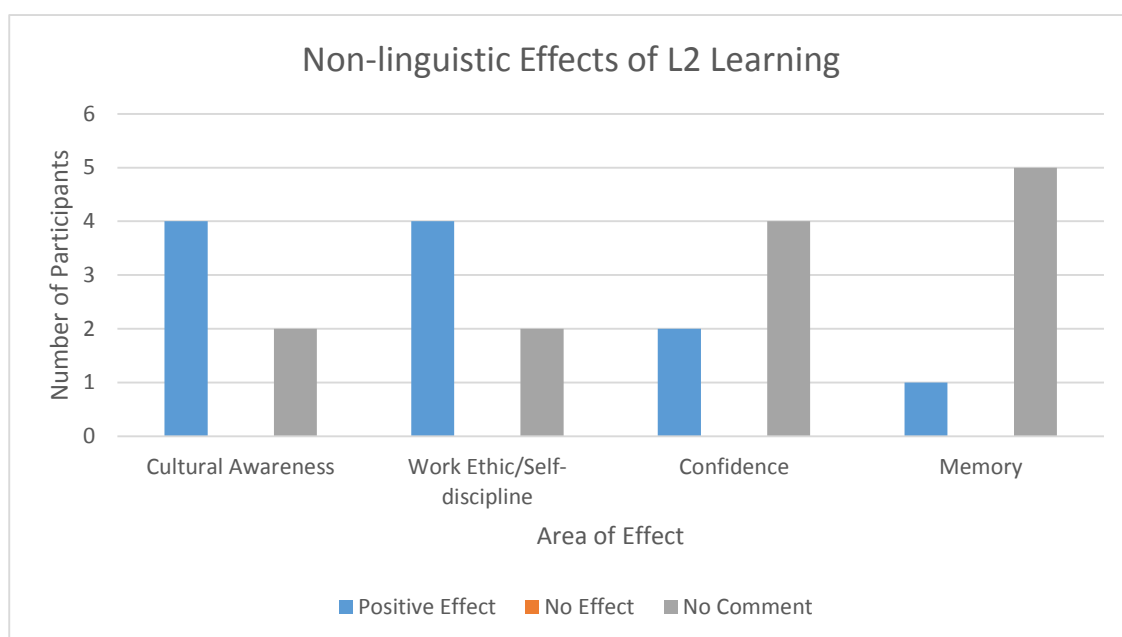


Figure 16. Non-linguistic effects of L2.

From this information it is clear that the research question has been answered and that participants perceive second language learning to have positive effects in a number of areas of L1, particularly in the areas of grammar (syntax), vocabulary and cultural awareness.

Conclusion

In the literature review a number of positive linguistic effects that occurred in L1 as a result of L2 instruction were discussed. These included pronounced benefits in all areas of grammar (Keckes & Papp, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1982), as well as positive effects on vocabulary (Swain & Lapkin), word awareness (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Worsley & Harbon, 2001; Yelland et al., 1993) and punctuation (Swain & Lapkin).

Research conducted by Keckes and Papp (2000) found that high-school students' L1 grammar improved as a result of their L2 instruction. This finding by Keckes and Papp is supported by the findings of this study as 100% Southern Tasmanian high-school English teacher participants perceive that their students experience positive effects to their L1 grammar in the area of syntax as a result of their second language learning. In addition to this, effects on vocabulary and punctuation, identified by Swain and Lapkin (1982), and a general improved awareness, addressed by Lambert and Tucker (1972), Worsley and Harbon (2001), and Yelland et al., (1993), have also been identified in this study. These vastly positive perceptions suggest that these are areas where students in Southern Tasmania will experience positive effects.

In addition to these links to previous research, positive linguistic effects in the areas of spelling, punctuation and pronunciation were noted, although each these areas of effect were only identified by less than 50% of the participants. The majority of participants did not consider L2 learning to have any effect on these three areas, making it impractical to assume that these effects are experienced generally by Southern Tasmanian high-school students. Punctuation is the only area of effect where the findings in this study differ to those of prior research where Swain and Lapkin (1982) concluded that L2 learning has a positive effect on punctuation.

From the prominence of these positive effects, particularly in the areas of grammar and vocabulary, it appears that high-school students in Southern Tasmania benefit as a result of their L2 learning. The fact that these teacher participants perceive that their students experience linguistic and non-linguistic effects mean that the incorporation of second languages into the curriculum is beneficial to students both in terms of their L1 skills as well as their development as global citizens (MCEETYA, 2008).

Whilst the linguistic effects in L1 as a result of L2 learning were the focus of this study, there were many significant non-linguistic effects that were noted by teacher participants. The most pronounced of these non-linguistic effects that teacher participants perceived their L2 students to experience is an improved cultural awareness. This awareness, which was noted by Participants 1, 2, 4 and 5, is strongly linked to the goal for creating active and informed citizens in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008). Teachers believe that the development of this awareness is a direct result of students' engagement with second languages at school, and has resulted in an improved understanding of and respect for other cultures. Additional non-linguistic effects that teachers perceived were improved memory, improved self-discipline and work ethic as well as an increase in confidence.

The fact that all of these positive effects (both linguistic and non-linguistic) on L1 have been observed despite the fact that most students only engage in 50 minutes of L2 study per week provides a strong argument against removing second languages from the curriculum as has occurred in some Western Australian schools (Hiatt, 2014). All second languages appear to yield a positive effect on L1, although teacher participants perceive that European second languages have a greater effect on L1, particularly in the areas of vocabulary and grammar, than Asian second languages. This is attributed to the similarities that exist between English and Romance languages such as French and Italian as these similarities are significantly greater than those that exist between English and Asian languages such as Japanese (Folse, 2004; Wister, 2012).

It is clear from these results that there are no negative effects on L1 skills in Southern Tasmanian high-schools. Results from this study show that high-school English teachers in Southern Tasmania perceive their students to experience many positive effects in their L1 from their engagement with L2. Consequently, second languages should continue to be integrated into the Australian curriculum.

Future research in this area may be able to make more specific conclusions about the effects of L2 on L1 on Southern Tasmanian high-school students, without being restricted by the limitations that were experienced in this study. In a long-term project, researchers may be able to focus on eliciting the effects that students' actually experience, rather than examining the effects that teachers perceive students to experience. By doing this, researchers may be able to conclude with increased certainty whether L2 high-school students in Southern Tasmania actually experience positive effects in their L1.

Further research could also address the unanticipated limitation of this study of the inability to discern the degree that these effects were related to students' engagement with L2 rather than being a result of students' general intelligence. By more accurately establishing the link between these elements, researchers may be able to more accurately assess the effect that L2 has on students' L1 skills.

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Appendix A: Principal Invitation Letter



29 August 2015

To School Principals,

My name is Rachel Jensen and I am a student at the University of Tasmania studying a Bachelor of Education. As part of my degree I am conducting a research project which examines teacher perceptions on the effects that second language learning has on high school students' native English skills. By establishing what sort of connection exists, if any, between the two areas, your school may wish to use the results of this research to inform how much class time is spent on second language learning.

High school English teachers are being sought to participate in this research. Participation in this research requires teachers to engage in a short (20-30 minute) interview. Interview questions are provided in the Participant Information Sheet.

To minimise disruption to participants, interviews will be organised at a time that suits them and in a location (most likely to be their place of work) that is most convenient to the participant. Face to face interviews are ideal, although alternative arrangements may be made on request.

Please can you pass on this information to all high-school English teachers in your school. And if you have any questions or queries, please contact me at jensenr@utas.edu.au, or my supervisor Paul Kebble at Paul.Kebble@utas.edu.au.

Rachel Jensen

University of Tasmania

(V.29-8)

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



29 August 2015

Dear Teacher,

My name is Rachel Jensen and I am a student at the University of Tasmania. As part of my Bachelor of Education with Honours I am researching teacher's perceptions on what effects second language learning has on first-language English skills under the supervision of Dr Paul Kebble.

The purpose of this study is to find indicative evidence of whether southern Tasmanian high-school English teachers perceive that their students' English skills have experienced a positive or negative effect as a result of their second language studies. The results from this research will link in to the debate about how much time in the curriculum should be dedicated to the second language learning area.

Your school principal has passed this information on to you because you fit the criteria for participation in this research as you are a high-school English teacher in a southern Tasmanian school where second languages are taught. Your participation from this point is entirely voluntary and if you choose not to participate then that is perfectly okay – at this stage, only your principal knows that you have received the letter of invitation and information sheet.

If you are interested in volunteering in this research, then your role as a participant will be to consider and respond to the following questions in a recorded interview:

- What second language(s) do your students study?
- How many hours of class time per week do students engage in their second language study?
- Do you know what methods of instruction are used in these second language classes? If so, please explain.
- How do you perceive the second language students' English skills to be compared with students who do not learn a second language?
- Have you noticed any effects (positive or negative) that students' second language learning has had on their English skills? If so, what form do these effects take?
- Are there any areas where these second language students outperform their peers?
- Are there any areas where these students are outperformed by their peers?

- What effect (if any) do you believe students' second language learning has had on their English vocabulary/grammar/punctuation/awareness of language?

This interview will take approximately 20 minutes of your time and will be conducted at your own school to minimise any inconvenience to you.

After the interview takes place, you will have the opportunity to view the transcript of the recording and suggest any changes as you see appropriate. You will also have the opportunity to withdraw from the research project at any point before 01.10.2015, and there will be no penalty or cause for concern if you wish to do this.

There are no immediate benefits to you as a result of your participation in this project, although as a result of your input we will be able to better identify the effect that second language study has on high-school students' first language English skills and this will help inform the decision on how much time is dedicated to second language learning within the curriculum and this may benefit you, your teaching practices and your students in the future.

There are no risks associated with this research. To protect your identity as a participant, identifying features such as names and schools will be removed and, where applicable, replaced with a pseudonym. By coding this data it will be possible to work out which information belongs to which participant so it can be removed even during the final stages of the research, should you wish to withdraw.

All of the information collected as part of this research will be kept on a password protected University of Tasmania server. All data collected that is not in electronic format will be scanned and stored on the server and any hard copies of data will be destroyed. Five years after the thesis has been completed, the electronic files will be destroyed. The files will be erased from the server as well as any temporary files from the computer used to complete this task.

The results of this research will be submitted to the University of Tasmania as part of a thesis which is a written requirement of my Bachelor of Education with honours. If you wish to have an electronic version of the final copy then this can be arranged.

Please contact me, Rachel Jensen, or my supervisor, Paul Kebble, if you are interested in participating in this research or if you have any questions. Our contact details are provided below:

Rachel Jensen (Student Researcher) or Dr Paul Kebble (Chief investigator/Supervisor)

jensenr@utas.edu.au

Paul.Kebble@utas.edu.au (03) 6324 3234

This study, H0014912, has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 3 6226 6254 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants.

Please keep this information sheet for your own reference and we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Rachel Jensen (Student Researcher)

Appendix C: Teacher Consent Form



26 August 2015

Effects of Second Language Learning on First Language English Skills: Southern Tasmanian Teacher Perceptions

Consent form for teacher participants.

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand that the study involves a recorded interview (approximately 20 minutes in length) which seeks to determine what effects I have noticed in my students' English skills as a result of their study of a second language. It has also been explained to me that I will have the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview and read the final transcript.
5. I understand that I will be asked to provide teacher observations on students' English learning, which are de-identified.
6. I understand that participation involves minimal risk and that there is little chance of being identified by my contribution.
7. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for five years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed.
8. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
9. I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of the research.
10. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw without any effect.

If I so wish, I may request that any data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research until 01/10/2015.

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement by Investigator

☐

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name: _____

Investigator's signature: _____

Date: _____

(V.24-7)